

THE HONORABLE JOHN C. COUGHENOUR

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON
AT SEATTLE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff,

v.

MUKUND MOHAN,

Defendant.

CASE NO. CR21-0041-JCC

ORDER

This matter comes before the Court on the parties' joint motion to proceed with a guilty plea hearing by video conference (Dkt. No. 33). Having thoroughly considered the motion and the relevant record, the Court hereby GRANTS the motion for the reasons explained herein.

I. BACKGROUND

Defendant is charged by Information (Dkt. No. 32) with submitting fraudulent loan applications under the Paycheck Protection Program and then laundering the proceeds. The parties have reached a plea agreement and jointly move for Defendant to enter a guilty plea by video conference (Dkt. No. 33). According to the parties' motion, Defendant intends to enter a guilty plea to one count of wire fraud and one count of money laundering pursuant to the plea agreement. (*Id.* at 1.) Defendant, who will consent to a remote plea hearing, seeks to move forward and resolve this matter without delay. (*Id.* at 2.) This will hasten the ultimate resolution of this case, including the payment of restitution, and provide Defendant certainty and assist him

1 in planning for his family's future. (*Id.*)

2 **II. DISCUSSION**

3 Because of the health risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Court may conduct a
4 felony plea hearing by video conference if the defendant consents and the Court finds that the
5 plea hearing cannot be further delayed without serious harm to the interests of justice. *See*
6 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Pub. L. No. 116-136,
7 §§ 15002(b)(2)(A), (b)(4), 134 Stat. 281, 528–29 (2020); W.D. Wash. General Order No. 17-20
8 (Dec. 23, 2020), 14-20 (Sept. 24, 2020), 04-20 (Mar. 30, 2020). Defendant has a strong interest
9 in the speedy resolution of this matter. Under General Order 18-20, in-person proceedings will
10 not resume in this District until at least April 1, 2021. *See* W.D. Wash. General Order No. 18-20
11 at 2 (Dec. 30, 2020). The Court finds that delaying Defendant's guilty plea hearing, and therefore
12 his sentencing, despite having already reached a plea agreement with the Government, would
13 cause serious harm to the interests of justice.

14 **III. CONCLUSION**

15 For the foregoing reasons, the Court GRANTS the parties' motion to proceed with a
16 guilty plea hearing by video conference (Dkt. No. 33). The Court ORDERS that Defendant's
17 guilty plea hearing before a Magistrate Judge be set as soon as practicable and be conducted by
18 video conference. The Court DIRECTS the Magistrate Judge to establish a record of Defendant's
19 consent for the hearing, in accordance with General Order No. 04-20.

20 DATED this 12th day of March 2021.

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24 John C. Coughenour
25 UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE
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